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**MADE EASY  
WEEKLY  
CURRENT AFFAIRS**

**WEEK-4**

22<sup>nd</sup> March - 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2021

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**Targeted Examinations:  
CSE, ESE, PSUs, State Exams,  
SSC and Banking Exams**

22<sup>ND</sup> MARCH 2021

## Freedom Pineapple Movement

- Taiwan released the “Freedom Pineapple” movement on Twitter to protest China's politically motivated ban on the import of pineapples from Taiwan.

### About Campaign:

- The Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen kicked off a “pineapple challenge” on social media to attract more Taiwanese consumers to buy the fruit and counter China's move.
- The call was seconded by the de facto embassies of the US and Canada in Taiwan, who posted pictures on social media professing their love for pineapples from the island.
- The campaign also received an enthusiastic response on social media in several other countries, including the UK, US, and India.
- The campaign helped Taiwan receive orders for 5,000 tonnes of the fruit from Japan.

## Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG)

- The government has formed the “Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG)” to conduct SARS-CoV-2 genomic surveillance across India.
- This consortium comprises of ten Regional Genome Sequencing Laboratories (RGSLs) namely, ILS Bhubaneswar, NIBMG Kalyani, NCCS Pune, ICMR-NIV Pune, CDFD Hyderabad, CSIR-CCMB Hyderabad, NIMHANS Bengaluru, InStem/NCBS Bengaluru, CSIR-IGIB Delhi, and NCDC Delhi.

### About INSACOG

- The INSACOG is made up of ten laboratories that specialize in Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS). The laboratories were founded with the following goals in mind:

- To read about the present status of the new SARS COV-2 version in India.
- To develop a sentinel monitoring system in order to identify genomic variants with public health implications early on.
- To classify genomic variations in rare occurrences or patterns, such as super spreader events and regions of high mortality or morbidity.
- The INSACOG was proposed to sequence the five per cent of all positive samples initially from each state.

## Volcano Bonds

- The Danish Red Cross launched the first of its kind catastrophe bond for the volcano-related disasters in collaboration with the several financial firms.

### Key Points:

- This bond would enable the disaster relief agency to immediately provide financial assistance to those affected by the eruption of ten volcanoes in Chile, Ecuador, Cameroon, Colombia, Mexico, Guatemala, and Indonesia.
- Plenum Investments and Schroder Wealth Management became the original bond holders. The company deals in insurance-related shares.
- The bond's payoff is based on a mathematical model that forecasts where the funds will be required based on the height of the ash cloud following the volcanic eruption and the prevailing winds.

### About Catastrophe Bonds:

- The catastrophe bonds insure against the damage from natural disasters such as earthquakes and storms. Some of the bonds also include the volcanic eruptions in baskets of the covered perils.
- These bonds offer a high yield to the investors who are going through the risk of losing some or all of their investment during the disaster.

**23<sup>rd</sup> MARCH 2021**

## Gandhi Peace Prize 2020

- The Government of India has conferred the Gandhi Peace Prize on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for 2020.
- The peace prize for the year 2019 was conferred on the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said of Oman.

## Sheikh Mujibur Rahman:

- He was known as Bangabandhu. Also regarded as "Jatir Janak" or "Jatir Pita" (both meaning "Father of the Nation") of Bangladesh.
- He was born on 17th March 1920 in Tungipara, India (now in Bangladesh) and passed away on 15th August 1975 in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- Year 2020 marked the birth centenary of Bangabandhu.
- He was a Bengali leader who became the first prime minister of Bangladesh (1972–75) and later became the president of the same in 1975.

## Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said:

- He has been the Arab world's longest-serving ruler. He ruled Oman for almost half a century.
- In 1970, with the help of British, Qaboos overthrew his father in a bloodless coup, emerging as the Sultan at age 29.

## About Gandhi Peace Prize:

- The annual award was instituted by the Government of India in 1995 during the commemoration of the 125th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi for those involved in social, economic and political transformation through non-violence.
- The award carries an amount of Rs. 1 crore, a Citation in a scroll, a plaque as well as an exquisite traditional handicraft/handloom item. The prize can be given to individuals, associations, institutions or organizations.

## Flexible fuel vehicles (FFVs)

- The government is aggressively pursuing the use of "Flexible Fuel Engines," which would expand the use of biofuels to power vehicles.
- Flexible Fuel Vehicles (FFVs) are adapted models of vehicles that can run on gasoline as well as doped gasoline with different amounts of ethanol blends.

## About Flexible-fuel vehicle (FFV):

- Flex-Fuel Vehicle is an alternative fuel vehicle which comprises the internal combustion engine which runs on more than one fuel.
- A flexible-fuel vehicle (FFV) or dual-fuel vehicle (colloquially called a flex-fuel vehicle) is an alternative fuel vehicle with an internal combustion engine designed to run on more than one fuel, usually gasoline blended with either ethanol or methanol fuel, and both fuels are stored in the same common tank.
- Flex-fuel vehicles are distinguished from bi-fuel vehicles, where two fuels are stored in separate tanks and the engine runs on one fuel at a time, for example, Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), or hydrogen.

## Loan Moratorium Scheme

- The Supreme Court of India has declined to participate in the government's and the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) decision on the loan moratorium system, refusing to prolong the moratorium term of six months.

## Key Highlights:

- The Supreme Court has also stated that additional reliefs such as absolute waiver of interest cannot be granted because they would damage depositors.
- The Supreme Court has stated that no interest on interest would be paid to creditors during the moratorium duration, regardless of loan size.

**NOTE:**

Loan moratorium is a period of time during which lenders are not expected to pay an EMI on a loan they have taken out. This is also an EMI holiday time. Such breaks are provided to assist people who are experiencing temporary financial challenges in properly planning their budgets.

**Aarogya Sanjeevani Policy**

- The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India asked health and general insurers to offer products to cover the basic health needs of clients by offering them the minimum of Rs 1 lakh and the maximum sum-insured of Rs 5 lakh.
- The product will be called Aarogya Sanjeevani Policy succeeded by the name of the insurance company.

**Key Features:**

- The policy is compulsory to all the health insurance companies. IRDAI has set up the premium for the policy in between Rs 1000 to Rs 5000.
- The policy will cover the amount between 1 lakh to 5 lakhs. It is also offered to insured persons in multiples of 50,000.
- Under the policy, the insurance companies will not impose the deductible. The insurance companies will also not provide the claim bonus of 5 percent every year with the maximum of 50 percent.
- The person lying between the age of 18 years to 65 years of age can get this policy. It will cover the 2% of the insurance cover for room rent during hospitalization.

**24<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2021****Free Space Quantum Communication**

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has demonstrated its free-space Quantum Communication for a distance of 300 metres for the first time in India.

- It was demonstrated at the Space Applications Centre (SAC) in Ahmedabad in between the two line-of-sight buildings within its campus.

**About Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) technology:**

- The Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) technology underpins Quantum Communication technology that ensures unconditional data security by virtue of the principles of quantum mechanics, which is not possible with the conventional encryption systems.
- The conventional cryptosystems used for data-encryption rely on the complexity of mathematical algorithms, whereas the security offered by quantum communication is based on the laws of Physics.
- Therefore, quantum cryptography is considered as 'future-proof', since no future advancements in the computational power can break quantum-cryptosystems.
- The free-space QKD was demonstrated at Space Applications Centre (SAC), Ahmedabad, between two line-of-sight buildings within the campus.
- The experiment was performed at night, in order to ensure that there is no interference of the direct sunlight.
- The experiment is a major breakthrough towards ISRO's goal of demonstrating Satellite Based Quantum Communication (SBQC), where ISRO is gearing up to demonstrate the technology between two Indian ground stations.

**About NAVIC:**

- Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS) or NAVIC is an autonomous regional satellite navigation system which provides the accurate real-time positioning and timing services.
- The name NavIC was given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi after the successful launch of the seventh navigation satellite, in April, 2016.
- To date, ISRO has built a total of nine satellites in the IRNSS series, of which eight are currently in orbit.

- The constellation is designed to provide accurate position information service to users in India as well as the region extending up to 1,500 km from its boundary, which is its primary service area

## e-Tendering Portal-PRANIT

- Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID), a central PSU under Ministry of Power has established an e-Tendering Portal-PRANIT. This portal will help in maintaining less paperwork, ease of operation and making the tendering process more transparent.
- The portal has been certified by the Standardisation, Testing and Quality Certification Directorate (STQC) under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

## About Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID):

- Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID) is a central public sector unit. It is also a Maharatna company. The Ministry of Power owns this CPSU.
- Objective: It is engaged mainly in the Transmission of Power. It transmits about 50% of the total power generated in India on its transmission network.
- **Headquarters:** Gurugram, India.

### ■ NOTE:

Power System Operation Corporation Limited (POSOCO) is a wholly owned Government of India enterprise working under the Ministry of Power. The organisation is responsible for ensuring the integrated operation of Grid in a reliable, secure and efficient manner.

**25<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2021**

## Pakal Dul Dam and Kalnai hydropower plant

- India and Pakistan recently discussed hydroelectric projects and other such issues at the end of two day talks of Indus water commissioners in Islamabad.

- Pakistan had raised objections in the Permanent Indus Commission regarding the designs of Pakal Dul and Lower Kalnai hydropower plants.

## About Pakal Dul Dam

- Pakal Dul Dam is a proposed 167m concrete-face rock-fill dam (CFRD) on Marusadar River, a tributary of Chenab River in Kishtwar district of J&K.
- The primary purpose of the dam is hydroelectric power generation.
- Its underground power house has four units each of 250 MW capacity (total 1000 MW).
- With 1000 MW capacity, it will be the largest Hydro Power Project in J&K on completion.

### ■ NOTE:

Chenab River flows in India and Pakistan. The river originates from the upper Himalayas in Lahaul and Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh and flows in Jammu, Punjab & Pakistan.

## Shaheed Bhagat Singh Smarak

- The Union Minister of Education virtually inaugurated the Shaheed Bhagat Singh Smarak in New Delhi on March 23, 2021.
- The inauguration took place on the occasion of a programme organised by the University of Delhi on 'Shaheed Diwas' to pay homage and commemorate 90 years of martyrdom of our national icons of the Indian National Movement –Shaheed Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev Thapar and Shivaram Rajguru.
- To commemorate the 90 years of martyrdom of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev, the university has organised a programme.
- On the occasion, an existing collection of books on freedom fighters which has been converted into "Shaheed Smriti Pustakalaya" was also made available for the students and teachers of Delhi university.

### Bhagat Singh:

- He was an Indian socialist revolutionary and folk hero of India's Independence movement following his two acts of dramatic violence against the British and his execution at age 23.
- Bhagat Singh and his associate Shivaram Rajguru had shot a British police officer, John Saunders in December 1928. Following this, Bhagat Singh (aged 23) was convicted and hanged on March 23, 1931.

#### NOTE:

- Shivaram Hari Rajguru was a Maharashtrian revolutionary. He was infamous for his part in the assassination of a British Raj police officer.
- Sukhdev Thapar was a senior Hindustan Socialist Republican Association associate. He took part in several acts alongside Bhagat Singh and Shivaram Rajguru.

### Poshan Abhiyan for the Elderly

- The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment plans to introduce the 'Poshan Abhiyan' for the Elderly in order to provide them with 'nutrition assistance.'
- The mission will offer help to indigent elders who are not living in Old Age Homes and are suffering from malnutrition.
- The mission will concentrate on obtaining organic food materials that are locally available in order to deliver hot-cooked mid-day meals.
- Scheme will be implemented by "Gram Panchayats and Urban Municipalities". 'Senior Citizens Welfare Fund' will be utilized to fund & implement the mission.

### About Poshan Abhiyan or National Nutrition Mission (NNM):

- The multi-ministerial initiative known as NNM was initiated in 2018 to resolve India's malnutrition crisis.

- It was created with the aim of improving the nutritional outcomes of infants, youth, pregnant and lactating mothers. The mission's main goal is to "eradicate hunger by 2022."

26<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2021

### Gram Ujala Scheme

- The Union Power and Renewable Energy Minister launched the Gram Ujala scheme in Varanasi. Under the scheme, the government offers the world's cheapest LED bulbs in rural areas at Rs. 10.
- This scheme is financed on the basis of carbon credits. It will claim carbon credits under "United Nations' Clean Development Mechanism (CDM)".
- Carbon credits will contribute to rupees 60 per piece while rupees 10 will be paid by rural consumers.
- Under the scheme, incandescent and compact fluorescent lamp (CFL) bulbs will be taken back from the rural customers.
- Under the programme, 7 watt and 12-Watt LED bulbs with 3 years warranty will be given to rural consumers against submission of working Incandescent bulbs.
- It will be implemented in villages of the 5 districts only and consumers can exchange a maximum of 5 LED bulbs.
- Under the GRAM UJALA programme, CESL will distribute high quality LED bulbs, at an affordable cost of 10 rupees per bulb in rural areas.

### Significance:

- Under the programme, the carbon credit documentation will be sent to UN accredited validators for inclusion into the Shine Program of activities.
- It will provide clean energy access and make a significant contribution towards mitigating climate change and achieving a sustainable future.

- It will have a significant impact on India's climate change action energy savings of 2025 million KWh/year and CO<sub>2</sub> reductions of 1.65 million T CO<sub>2</sub>/year.

#### ■ NOTE:

The Convergence Energy Services Limited (CESL) is a wholly owned subsidiary of Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL), a PSU under the Ministry of Power.

## INS Vajra

- Indian Coast Guard Ship Vajra was commissioned to the Indian Coast Guard by Chief of Defence Staff at Kattupalli in Chennai.

### Key Points:

- The ship was indigenously designed and built by Larsen and Toubro Shipbuilding Ltd. Sixth in the series of seven offshore patrol vessels, Vajra is fitted with highly sophisticated navigation and communication systems.
- The ship has a 30mm gun as main armament and equipped with 2 FCS controlled 12.7 mm SRCG (Stabilised Remote Controlled Gun) for enhanced fighting efficiency.
- The ship is designed to carry one twin engine helicopter with night flying capabilities and also four high speed boats, two rigid hull inflatable boats for taking up search and rescue, law enforcement and maritime patrolling.

## Finance Bill 2021

- The Parliament passed the "Finance Bill 2021", which seeks to bring to effect the financial proposals of the central government for the financial year 2021-22.

### Key features of Finance Bill 2021:

- Finance Bill 2021 provides 10-year income-tax exemption to the National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development and 5-year tax exemption to private sector development finance institutions, which can be extended by another five years.

- Bill amends the Finance Act, Income Tax Act, 1961; Securities Contracts (Regulation) Act, 1956; Central Sales Tax Act, 1956; Life Insurance Corporation Act, 1956 and SEBI Act, 1992.
- According to the bill, senior citizens who get pension and interest income have been exempted from filing tax returns. However, no changes have been made in the income tax rate.

### New provisions to the Income Tax Act, 1961:

- This clause is meant to prevent the practice of failure to file returns by a "specified individual" whose case has been deducted or collected. Furthermore, if an individual has made TDS/TCS of Rs. 50,000 in the previous two years and has failed to file an income tax return, the rate TDS/TCS would be deducted at a higher rate.

### Small Companies' definition:

- The minister also suggested revising the concept of small businesses under the Companies Act, 2013 for small companies by increasing their paid-up capital rates. The threshold has been adjusted from "not more than Rs 50 lakh" to "not more than Rs 2 crore."

27<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2021

## World's First Ship Tunnel

- Norway is set to construct World's first ship tunnel which will start in 2022 and will be completed by 2025-26.

### Key Highlights of Project

- Norway has planned to construct a Ship tunnel underneath the mountains in the Stadhavet peninsula of Norway.
- Tunnel will burrow through the narrowest point of the Stadhavet peninsula for which conventional blasting will be employed. It will also use underground drilling rigs and pallet rigs.
- The tunnel will be 37 meters high, 1,700 metres long and 26.5 metres wide.

- A total of \$315 million would be spent in constructing the ship tunnel.
- It has extended 12 weeks' leave to 26 weeks which can be bifurcated as post and pre-delivery leaves.

### Significance

- The Ship Tunnel Project has been designed to help in navigation of ships through harsh weather and rough tides conditions in Stadhavet Sea in North-western Norway.

### Miscarriages Bereavement Leave Law

- New Zealand's Parliament has passed the 'Miscarriage bereavement leave law' which provides mothers and their partners a "right to paid leave" after a miscarriage or stillbirth.
- New Zealand has become the second country, following India, across the world to pass such legislation.
- The Bill will provide women and their partners time to come to terms with their loss. Leave provisions apply to mothers, their partners and the parents who are planning to have a child through adoption or surrogacy.
- New Zealand has been a pioneer on issues related to women's rights. It also passed a law in 2020 to decriminalise abortion.

#### ■ DO YOU KNOW? \_\_\_\_\_

New Zealand was the first country to give voting rights to women.

### India's Maternity Leave (Amendment) Bill, 2017

- This Act is applicable to establishments such as corporates, mines, factories, shops and establishment act, plantations, and government establishments.
- To be eligible under this Act, women employees should have completed working for 80 days in the current establishment in the last 12 months.
- Paid leave is based on average daily wage during the period of absence.

### National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development Bill

- Parliament has passed "National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development Bill, 2021" (NBFID Bill) which seeks to establish a National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development to support 'infrastructure financing' across the country.
- NBFID would work as a principal development financial institution (DFIs). It includes development of bonds and derivatives markets which are required for infrastructure financing.

#### About National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NBFID):

- NBFID will be set up as a corporate statutory body, which will have the authorized share capital of one lakh crore rupees along with financial and developmental objectives.
- It will act as a catalyst for the ecosystem of infrastructure funding.
- NBFID will be answerable to Parliament.
- It will be managed by Chairman & board nominated professionals who will be appointed by Government.
- Shares of NBFID can be held by central government, financial institutions, pension funds, insurers, multilateral institutions, Banks, sovereign wealth funds, and other institutions.

#### About Development Financial Institution (DFIs)

- Development Financial Institutions (DFIs) are set up to provide long-term finance for those segments of the economy where risks involved are beyond acceptable limits of commercial banks and other financial institutions.
- DFIs do not accept deposits from people. Instead, they source funds from market, government and multilateral institutions. They are often supported by government guarantees.

28<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2021

## Competency-based Assessment Framework

- Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has launched a competency-based assessment framework for classes 6-10 for three subjects namely, English (reading), Science, and Mathematics.
- It is a part of CBSE Competency Based Education Project which was in accordance with the new National Education Policy (NEP) in next 2-3 years.
- For this, CBSE had collaboration with British Council and three agencies from the UK namely Cambridge, NARIC and Alphaplus.
- This Assessment Framework is the basis for larger project exercise under which 40 assessment designers, 180 test item writers and 360 master trainer mentors are being trained to use the assessment framework.

## About National Education Policy 2020

- The Education Policy 2020 envisages a significant shift in the education ecosystem across India.
- The policy lays emphasis on competency-based education instead of education which tests rote learning. It is a comprehensive framework for elementary education, higher education and vocational training across rural and urban India.
- The policy was approved by the Union Cabinet on July 29, 2020.
- It outlines the vision of India's new education system by replacing the National Policy on Education, 1986.

## GNCTD Amendment Bill

- President Ramnath Kovind gave assent to the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021, after Parliament passed the Bill.
- It amends the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991 which provides for certain provisions regarding functioning of Legislative Assembly and Government of Delhi.

## Key Provisions of the Bill:

- According to the Bill, "government" in Delhi means Lieutenant Governor (LG).
- The Bill amends certain powers and responsibilities of the Legislative Assembly and Lieutenant Governor.
- Bill provides that Rules related to procedure and conduct of the business in assembly must be consistent with Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha.
- It prohibits the Legislative Assembly from making any rule to enable itself or its Committees to consider matters of day-to-day administration of Delhi or conduct any inquiry into administrative decisions. Bill makes all such rules made before its enactment void.
- Bill also provides that LG's opinion must be obtained before taking any executive action on the decisions of the Minister or Council of Ministers.
- It also requires LG to reserve those bills for President which cover any matter outside the purview of powers of the Legislative Assembly.
- The Act also empowers the LG with discretionary powers in matters where the Legislative Assembly makes laws.
- After the assent, the elected government is bound to take the L-G's advice before taking any decision.

29<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2021

## New Assessment on African Elephants by IUCN

- The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List recently showed that, African elephants living in forests and savannas are increasingly threatened with extinction.

## Key Highlights:

- New assessments by IUCN underscore the persistent pressures that two species of elephants in Africa face due to poaching for ivory and human encroachment.
- The survey also highlights that savanna elephants have been endangered while the smaller forest elephants are critically endangered.

- Earlier, IUCN had treated both the species of elephants as 'Vulnerable'. But later it separated them on the basis of genetic evidence which highlighted the difference between both the species.
- Data from IUCN cited that populations of savanna elephants from Africa are found in a variety of habitats which had decreased by around 60% over the last 50 years.

### About African Elephants

- It is a genus with two living elephant species, African bush elephant and smaller African forest elephant. Both the species are social herbivores having grey skin but they have different size and colour of their tusks.
- They are considered at heavy risk of extinction in the IUCN Red List. Bush elephants are considered endangered while forest elephants are considered critically endangered.
- These species are threatened by habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, and poaching for the illegal ivory trade.

### Shaheen 1-A Missile

- Pakistan has successfully test-fired a nuclear-capable surface-to-surface ballistic missile with a range of 900 kilometers.

### Key Highlights:

- It is a land-based supersonic and short-to-medium range surface-to-surface guided ballistic missile of Pakistan.
- It was jointly designed and developed by a joint venture of NESCOM and National Defence Complex (NDC).
- Missile has been dedicated and named after a species of Falcon inhabitant of mountains of Pakistan.
- Missile modifies its trajectory, improving accuracy and provides the capability to evade missile defence systems.

- It is based on terminal guidance system technology. This technology helps in improving warhead accuracy by firing small thrusters to adjust trajectory of warheads and uses satellite navigation systems to help find the target.

30<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2021

### NATHEALTH Annual Summit

- Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare Dr. Harsh Vardhan, addressed the 7th annual summit of NATHEALTH which focused on 'Indian Health system expansion in post-COVID era'.

### Key Highlights:

- In the Summit, the government talked about the "National Health Policy" whose primary vision is to attain the highest possible level of health and well-being for all irrespective of all age groups.
- To attain this vision, the policy emphasizes preventive and promotive aspects of health and providing universal access to good quality healthcare services.
- Government also launched the Ayushman Bharat program with the objective of providing Universal Free Access to primary health care, promoting health and wellbeing.

### About Pradhan Mantri Atma Nirbhar Swasthya Yojana

- This scheme was launched with the aim of strengthening health systems to meet challenges of COVID-19 pandemic and future pandemics.
- It also seeks to strengthen the expanding and building robust IT-enabled surveillance systems in order to track and contain spread of diseases.
- Several components of the scheme include training and mentoring, Critical Care Blocks for advanced treatment, establishing new Regional Centres for Disease Control and strengthening the network of public health labs.

## Electoral Bonds

- The Supreme Court of India recently refused to stay sale of a fresh set of electoral bonds from 1 April. This decision was taken ahead of assembly elections across four states, viz. Kerala, West Bengal, Assam and Tamil Nadu and in Union Territory of Puducherry.

### Key Highlights:

- The Supreme Court, while refusing the stay, underlines that these bonds were allowed to be released in 2018 and 2019 without any interruption.
- There exists no justification to stay these bonds as sufficient safeguards are there.

### About Electoral Bond

- It is a financial instrument similar to promissory note which is used to make donations to political parties and is issued by Scheduled Commercial banks after authorisation from the Central Government.
- It is issued only against cheque and digital payments which are redeemable in designated accounts of a registered political party within the prescribed time limit.
- The Proposal to issue an Electoral Bond was announced in 2017.

## PM Modi Visit to Bangladesh

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently concluded Bangladesh on his 2-day visit at the invitation of Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina.

### Key Highlights

- The visit included the commemoration very significant events, like celebration of 50 years of Bangladesh Liberation and the establishment of diplomatic ties between the India and Bangladesh, and 100th birth anniversary of Father of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.
- Apart from these, there were five MoUs signed by PM Modi related to connectivity, commerce, IT and sports to build the bilateral ties between the two nations.

- MoU on Disaster Management, strengthen and Mitigation.
- MoU on Bangladesh National Cadet Corps (BNCC) and National Cadet Corps of India (INCC)
- MoU on the establishment of a framework of Cooperation in the Area of Trade Remedial measures between Bangladesh and India.
- Tripartite MoU on Establishment of Sport Facilities at Rajshahi College field and surrounding areas.
- Tripartite MoU on supply of ICT equipment, courseware and reference books and training for Bangladesh-Bharat Digital services and Employment and Training (BDSET) Centre.

### NOTE:

December 6, on which India formally recognized Bangladesh, will be celebrated as Maitri Diwas.

31<sup>st</sup> MARCH 2021

## Rooppur Nuclear power plant

- Recently, India made a deal with Bangladesh where Indian companies will develop the transmission lines of Bangladesh Rooppur Nuclear power plant.

### About Rooppur Nuclear power plant

- Rooppur Nuclear power plant is an under-construction 2.4 GWe nuclear power plant in Bangladesh. It is being constructed at Rooppur (Rupppur) in the Pabna District of Bangladesh, on the bank of Padma River.
- There are two units of plants which are expected to be completed in 2022 and 2024 respectively. Each will produce 1200MW of electricity.
- It has significance as it will be the Bangladesh's first nuclear power plant.
- The Rooppur project is the first initiative under the Indo-Russian deal to undertake atomic energy projects in third countries.
- A tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in March 2018, was signed at Moscow, Russia between Russia, Bangladesh and India for the Rooppur Nuclear Power Project.

- In June 2018, Infrastructure major, Hindustan Construction Company Ltd. (HCC) was given contract for Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant.

#### ■ NOTE:

It will be for the first time when any Indian company will be involved in any nuclear project out of the country. Since India is not a Nuclear Supplier group (NSG) member, it cannot participate directly in construction of Atomic power reactors.

### GISAT-1

- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has revised the scheduled launch of geo-imaging satellite GISAT-1 on board GSLV-F10 rocket after a minor issue occurred with the spacecraft.

#### About Geo Imaging Satellite (GISAT)

- GSAT is an Indian imaging satellite which comprises a high temporal resolution which helps in providing near real time imaging along with fast revisit capability besides real time monitoring. It will also carry multi-spectral multi-resolution imaging instruments.
- GISAT-1 is the first state-of-the-art agile earth observation satellite. It will be placed in a Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit by GSLV-F10.
- The satellite will facilitate near real-time observation of Indian sub-continent at frequent intervals, under cloud-free conditions.
- It will produce a selected field image in every 5 minutes. It will provide an image of the entire Indian landmass every 30 minutes at 42 m spatial resolution.
- It has also installed Array detectors in Visible and Near-InfraRed (VNIR) and Short Wave-InfraRed (SWIR) bands.

### Double Mutant Virus

- A new double mutant coronavirus variant has been detected in several Indian states, triggering fear that India's "second wave" could be more dangerous than the first. Scientists are checking if this has increased the infectivity or is making COVID-19 more severe.
- The Indian SARS-CoV-2 Consortium on Genomics (INSACOG) is carrying out genomic sequencing on the latest samples of the double mutant variant.
- So far, a total of 736 cases of the variant first discovered in the UK, 34 of the one from South Africa and one case of the variant from Brazil have been traced in the country.

#### About Double Mutant Variant:

- Double Mutation is when two mutated strains of a virus come together and form a third strain.
- The one reported in India is the result of the combination of E484Q, and L452R strains. The L452R strain is found in California in the United States, while the E484Q strain is indigenous.
- Mutation in the virus is a normal process. But some mutations help the virus in defending itself from vaccines or antibodies or linking to a spike in cases. However, the capability of double mutant coronavirus variants in increased infectivity or in making COVID-19 more severe is still uncertain.

#### ■ NOTE:

So far, only three global Variants of Concern (VOCs) have been identified: the U.K. variant (B.1.1.7), the South African (B.1.351) and the Brazilian (P.1) lineage.

